

Intermédialités

Histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques

Intermediality

History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies

Soundscapes of the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema

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Numéro 37-38, printemps–automne 2021

résister
resisting

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086256ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1086256ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Revue intermédialités

ISSN

1705-8546 (imprimé)

1920-3136 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Araújo Porto, I. & de Souza Rossini, M. (2021). Soundscapes of the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema. *Intermédialités / Intermediality*, (37-38), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1086256ar>

Résumé de l'article

Cet article explore le concept de paysage sonore de Raymond Murray Schafer (2001), tout particulièrement dans sa relation et son applicabilité à la discussion engagée par certains auteurs autour de la construction de l'espace au cinéma (Prysthon, 2017). Pour ce faire, nous commençons par passer en revue le concept de paysage sonore dans Schafer (2001), et nous réfléchissons à la pertinence de cette notion pour l'étude du design sonore. Ensuite, nous étudions comment cette relation entre paysage sonore et design sonore se présente dans les deux générations du Novo Ciclo de Cinema Pernambucano (Nogueira, 2009). Enfin, nous essayons de montrer les différentes façons dont ces films représentent les sons du nord-est du Brésil, parfois niant, parfois s'identifiant à la notion d'« invention du nord-est » présentée par Albuquerque Jr. (1993).

Soundscapes of the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema

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MIRIAM DE SOUZA ROSSINI

INTRODUCTION

In this article we discuss the use of technical-aesthetic resources in the sound design of several films in the context of Pernambuco's New Cycle of Cinema in Brazil, a film movement initiated in the 1990s, and a particular way of hearing the soundscapes of the Brazilian Northeast region. Using examples of films from this cycle, the article offers an overview of the movement. We begin by approaching the concept of soundscape by Raymond Murray Schafer¹ in its relation and applicability to the discussion of the construction of space in cinema.² Specifically, we ask whether Schafer's concept can be adapted to analyze film sound design and whether the concepts of *paysage* (as in landscape painting) and soundscape converge to create an understanding of space in cinema.

To answer these questions, we first approach Schafer's ideas in their relation to art history, in which landscape painting is prevalent, and the uses of these tools in film studies. We also consider how this concept is often compared to other ideas about sound design in the works of James Lastra³ and Michel Chion,⁴ among others. Then

1. Raymond Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Rochester, Vermont, Destiny Books, 1993.

2. Ângela Prysthon, "Paisagens em desaparecimento: cinema pernambucano e suas relações com o espaço," *Revista da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação – E-compós*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2017, p. 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.30962/ec.1348> (accessed 18 November 2021).

3. James Lastra, *Sound Technologies and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000.

4. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* [1991], trans. Claudia Gorbman (ed.), New York, Columbia University Press, 1994.

we present how the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema,⁵ shaped by two successive generations of Brazilian filmmakers, proposes that the movement's films participate in an "invention of the Northeast"⁶ through their depictions of the social spaces in which their narratives take place. On this point, we follow the work of Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr. on the cultural and political mechanisms that defined, towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the Brazilian Northeast as a region. He shows how literature and journalism greatly contributed to producing this sense of regionalism. Albuquerque Jr. argues that neither the division between North and Northeast nor the polarization between different regions in Brazil are natural. He points out that a dichotomy is constructed through media, culture, and politics and that, in its most radical expression, it poses the South as "civilized, superior"⁷ and the Northeast as a *locus* of drought, misery, and messianic cults of personality.

In accordance with both Schafer and Albuquerque Jr., we suppose that soundscape/landscape is constructed rather than given. We propose that the New Cycle's representational choices of landscapes and soundscapes in fact resist the stereotypes created by previous regionalist notions. The choices of music in these films, the sound effects, the speaking portion, and the sound editing go beyond what can be understood as identification or estrangement in relation to preconceived notions about the Northeast and what it means to be "Northeastern."

Hence, we aim to understand the use of Northeastern spaces in these films as political practices of resistance that have produced, in the past decade, new ways of hearing this region. These sensibilities help to untangle certain aspects of preconceived sociopolitical and economic notions about the Northeast by other Brazilian regions, a power struggle that has been developing through centuries, as Albuquerque Jr.'s research shows. The New Cycle presents us with a novel construction of space in film that relies heavily on sound.

5. Amanda Mansur Custódio Nogueira, *O novo ciclo de cinema em Pernambuco: a questão do estilo*, master's dissertation, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2009, <https://repositorio.ufpe.br/handle/123456789/3013> (accessed 18 November 2021).

6. Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr., *O Engenho Anti-Moderno: A Invenção do Nordeste*, doctoral thesis, Universidade de Campinas, 1994.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

SOUNDSCAPES

In the past few years, a growing number of studies have established a relationship between space in film and the concept of soundscape developed by Schafer. Concerned with the conservation and description of real-world soundscapes, the Canadian composer proposes an acoustic ecology. However, in so doing, he defines soundscape as any physical or abstract space (abstract space being any mediated space) that is filled with sound, natural or not.⁸ The study of soundscapes would, therefore, be a transdisciplinary approach between the natural and social sciences and the arts. For Schafer, this last category is justified because he regards the arts not only as performing the function of registering soundscapes, but also influencing the construction of what we hear in cities, villages, and fields. This exchange is further reinforced by the industrial project and the aestheticization of everyday life in modernity. When he poses his concept of soundscape, Schafer has two concerns. First, critiquing the evolution of our sonorous perception of space due to industrial sounds, thus his division between high (hi-fi) and low (lo-fi) fidelity environments. The second is to establish an interdisciplinary field that aims to describe and discuss such soundscapes.

High fidelity (hi-fi) soundscapes have a positive signal-to-noise⁹ ratio, which is typical of the countryside (or associated with it). Low fidelity (lo-fi) ones have a negative signal-to-noise ratio, typical of cities (major cities at least). It is important to note that Schafer uses the term “low fidelity” in a way that differs from its use in the music industry (which defines it as a technological value) and in some theories of cinema (which define it as the correspondence or permanence of an “original” value).

These latter ideas of fidelity are only possible when we conceive of one recording as being to some degree less mediated than another. That does not seem to be the case either for music or for film. Lastra¹⁰ shows how the very “original” event is already mediated by several natural or artificial conditions (such as the acoustics of a studio or

8. Schafer, 1993, p. 245.

9. It should be noted that the word “*ruído*” in Portuguese means both “noise” and “sound effects.” Sometimes filmmakers draw on this ambiguity, as is the case of Kleber Mendonça Filho’s interview: Alysson Oliveira, “Estreia: Premiado ‘O som ao redor’ mostra contradições sociais do Brasil,” *GI*, 3 January 2013, <http://g1.globo.com/pop-arte/cinema/noticia/2013/01/estreia-premiado-o-som-ao-redor-mostra-contradicoes-sociais-do-brasil.html> (accessed 18 November 2021). In this article, we tried to be specific about each use.

10. Lastra, 2000.

music hall). All positioning and treating of equipment is already mediation, therefore there is no way to be more or less faithful to the “original.”¹¹

Schafer approaches fidelity in a metaphorical way. Lo-fi would in this case be associated with excessive information (noise) that makes it harder to impart meaning. It is important to remove fidelity from any notion of “original event” and from its strictly technical character and understand it as an operator of a shift towards noise and experimentation within narrative sound cinema. The definition of noise, logically, is not a given and depends on certain social codes that define which sounds are accepted in any given space. In the specific case of cinema, we share in Lastra’s idea that there is no actual low fidelity (since the matter of “originality” is debatable), but rather there are low fidelity effects, which are defined in opposition to codes of what constitutes “‘good’ representation.”¹²

Schafer’s effort lies in supplying elements for a new field of interdisciplinary study,¹³ that of soundscapes, largely ignored in studies of landscape in the visual arts and in cinema. It is therefore easy to understand that he opted for a broad definition of soundscape: “We may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape, or an acoustic environment as a soundscape.”¹⁴

Landscape in film begins to distinguish itself from its pictorial counterpart for numerous reasons. The possibility of utilizing camera movements and the notion of duration, which were added to the pictorial art of landscape, were the first to become apparent. As technology advanced, the possibility of recording *in loco* reinforced the feeling of tangibility within space. The development, both technical and aesthetic, of depth of focus increased usage options, allowing one to include small actions within the landscape. Finally, the introduction of sound added new dimensions to landscape,

11. Jonathan Sterne explains how the very idea of the original only comes into being after the advent of sound recording and reproduction technologies. That is, it is only because a copy exists that discussing the traits of the original becomes relevant. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2003.

12. For example, Lastra brings up how sound cinema, from its beginning, positions both microphones (during capture) and main speakers (during screenings) frontally, to privilege the hearing of dialogues. The centrality of voice works as a mean to achieve “good representation,” so films that follow this model are considered more faithful, regardless of the fact that voice is not necessarily central in the “original sounds” of the real world. Lastra, 2000, p. 139.

13. Cinema is not cited in the book, only in acknowledgements of professionals in the area who have aided in Schafer’s research.

14. Schafer, 1994, p. 7.

leaving behind a purely visual perspective in favour of a *point of audition*, as Chion¹⁵ puts it. Chion argues that there is a tendency to try to use sound in film to aesthetically emulate the subjective experience of certain characters and to ensure that the spectator feels at the centre of the space. Bringing up the notion of point of view, Chion affirms that similarly to what happens with vision, we are always asking where these sounds are coming from or who dietetically is hearing them. In this context, the viewer's sense of space then becomes more complete. Sound in cinema, therefore, is a fundamental aspect that separates film from its pictorial peers.

When Schafer defines soundscapes as an interdisciplinary field that encompasses everything that can be heard, this allows us to speak of a filmic environment (in the sense of representation of space) in which also figure sound elements that do not have a special meaning, such as the textures and intensity of voices, of soundtrack scores, and of ambient sounds. We are not trying here to establish a “one-to-one” relation between film soundscape and real-life soundscape, the latter of which appears to be Schafer's primary focus. Rather, we believe that it is possible, through the study of how various filmmakers are putting together soundscapes for their movies, to understand how these filmmakers perceive the soundscapes of their cities. We will observe this use through contemporary Brazilian movies made in the Northeast.

THE PERNAMBUCO NEW CYCLE OF CINEMA

To start, we will contextualize the group of cinematographers who take part in what we are calling¹⁶ the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema,¹⁷ in its two generations. Through the work of authors who discuss this movement, we will also present points that provide a global insight of how that group was established, their aesthetic-political similarities and differences, and how it relates to the matter of soundscapes. Understanding this context will allow us to better approach the theme of soundscapes in the filmography we will analyze, considering that nobody makes films, or art in general, in a social vacuum.

15. Chion, 1994, p. 89.

16. Based on Nogueira, 2009.

17. *Novo Cíelo de Cinema Pernambucano*, in the original. We opted for a literal translation, because it reflects the actual meaning of the term and to facilitate reading.

In order to establish that chronology, we will start by discussing the first generation that arises with the *Retomada* of Brazilian cinema¹⁸ and which begins, in the Northeastern region, with Paulo Caldas and Lirio Ferreira's movie *Baile Perfumado* (*Perfumed Ball*, 1997). Amanda Nogueira¹⁹ defines this new Cycle as neither a specific filmography nor a movement since the filmmakers were not united around an organization or style guidelines. They were a group of producers who had a common past (all of them had gravitated around the Centre for Arts and Communication at the Federal University of Pernambuco in the late 1980s and early 1990s).

Nogueira uses the term "*brodagem*"²⁰ to refer to the fact that all directors describe one another as friends and there is great circulation between teams. Besides that, first generation movies have common aesthetic marks ("pop regionalism,"²¹ affinity with the *manguebeat*²² movement, a sense of self-irony, among others). Furthermore, Nogueira points out that the press would refer to this group of filmmakers by various monikers, such as "new generation of filmmakers," "Árido Movie movement," "new Pernambuco cinema."²³ She uses the term "New Cycle" to recall previous

18. In 1990, the incoming government of Fernando Collor de Mello closed Embrafilme, a public company responsible for producing and distributing Brazilian films. With it, most of the laws that regulated the field of movie production in Brazil were revoked. The result was a drastic decline in movie production. This process was only reversed through the creation of the Audiovisual Law of 1993, which implemented financing for new films. Thus, the period between 1994 and 2001 became known as the *Retomada* (which roughly means "return") of Brazilian cinema. See Maria do Rosário Caetano, *Cinema brasileiro (1990–2002): da crise dos anos Collor à retomada*, Rio de Janeiro, ALCEU, vol. 8, no. 15, 2007, p. 196–216.

19. Nogueira, 2009. Most of the literature on the New Cycle comes from works that explore the films or directors individually. So, even if we do not accept the totality of theoretical assumptions, we refer to Nogueira thesis whenever we need to approach New Cycle's filmmakers as a group.

20. Adaptation of the word "brother" in the Portuguese language.

21. Nogueira, 2009, p. 39. The author explores a tendency in both New Cycle and *manguebeat* to mix elements of pop culture and traditional folk art.

22. *Manguebeat* (or *manguebit*) is a cultural movement originating in Recife in the 1990s. Arising from the music of bands such as Nação Zumbi and Mundo Livre S/A, it spread across various areas in the realm of the arts. Its main characteristics were a mix of traditional elements of Pernambuco culture—such as the *maracatu*, a musical rhythm—with foreign genres, such as rock or funk, and social and economic critique concerning the marginalization of the *mangue* regions in Recife. A literal translation for *mangue* is mangrove, this is the ecosystem above which the city of Recife was built. It is also extremely diverse; so, it became a metaphor for the *manguebeat* artists' intention of assimilating Pernambuco's popular culture. See Nara Aragão Fonseca, *Da lama ao cinema: interfaces entre o cinema e a cena mangue em Pernambuco*, master's thesis, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2006, <https://repositorio.ufpe.br/handle/123456789/3500> (accessed 18 November 2021).

23. Nogueira, 2009, p. 9.

movements in the state's film history, such as the Recife Cycle (in the 1920s) and the Super 8 Cycle (in the 1970s). In fact, the filmmakers she highlights (notably, but not exclusively: Paulo Caldas, Marcelo Gomes, Cláudio Assis, Lírio Ferreira) would go on to produce movies of great importance for Brazilian cinema, such as Cláudio Assis' *Amarelo Manga* (*Mango Yellow*, 2003), Marcelo Gomes' *Cinema, aspirinas e urubus* (*Cinema, Aspirins, and Vultures*, 2005), and Lírio Ferreira and Hilton Lacerda's *Cartola – Música para os olhos* (2007). Nogueira also considers the creation of the Short Film Law (1975)²⁴ and the Audiovisual Law (1993),²⁵ among other federal or state legislative initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s, as essential in motivating this productive boom of the New Cycle.²⁶

In another political-cultural context, Marcelo Ikeda²⁷ claims that the spread of federal, state, and municipal grants, between 2005 and 2014, strengthened the creation of regional cinema centres outside of the Rio de Janeiro–São Paulo axis. It is in this environment that the second generation of the Pernambuco New Cycle flourishes. Ângela Prysthon, in analyzing four Northeastern movies, directed from 2010 onwards, remarks on the rise of a “new generation” in Pernambuco.²⁸

Once again, a group of filmmakers is defined not by the existence of a manifesto, but by associated experiences, themes, and aesthetic preferences. Much like the previous generation, this new one was formed by directors who, for the most part, graduated in cinema in the early 2000s from the Federal University of Pernambuco, started out making documentaries or short films, and participated in communal projects, such as the short film collection *Projeto Torres Gêmeas* (2011).²⁹ Among common aesthetic markers figure an escape from regional stereotypes, a critique of the city of Recife's

24. In Portuguese: Lei do Curta (1975), http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/1970-1979/l6281.htm (accessed 18 November 2021).

25. In Portuguese: Lei do Audiovisual (1993), http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l8685.htm (accessed 18 November 2021).

26. Nogueira, 2009, p. 35.

27. Marcelo Ikeda, “O ‘Novíssimo Cinema Brasileiro.’ Sinais de uma renovação,” *Cinémas d'Amérique latine*, no. 20, 2012, p. 136, available at Journals OpenEdition, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cinelatino.597> (accessed 18 November 2021).

28. Prysthon, 2017, p. 2. Along with Nogueira, Prysthon is one of few authors who allude to a second generation of the New Cycle, although not in a systematical approach. We are influenced by the insight that the film production since 2011 can be thought of as a second generation of the New Cycle.

29. This is an experimental project that included more than twenty artists in Recife. It explores the environmental and social aspects of the building of two luxury skyscrapers (dubbed Twin Towers) near the beach in the central neighbourhood São José. The film was the directorial debut for many New Cycle directors, such as Marcelo Pedrosa and Marcelo Lordello.

architecture, stylistic borrowings from genre films (such as the horror-adjacent soundtrack of *O som ao redor* [*Neighbouring Sounds*]), the search for an atmospheric work, influence from Asian cinema.³⁰ Daniel Bandeira's feature-length film *Amigos de Risco* (2008) would become a benchmark for this second generation. Other movies could be added: Gabriel Mascaro's *Avenida Brasília Formosa* (2010), Kleber Mendonça Filho's *O som ao redor* (*Neighbouring Sounds*, 2012), Gabriel Mascaro's *Ventos de Agosto* (*August Winds*, 2014), Marcelo Lordello's *Eles voltam* (*They'll Come Back*, 2014), and Marcelo Pedroso's *Brasil S/A* (*Brazilian Dream*, 2015).

THE NORTHEAST AS LANDSCAPE

An essential question runs through what we have said here in relation to soundscapes in these films: the question of the social space of the Brazilian Northeast. Albuquerque Jr. (1993), in a work that inspired several researchers and artists, demonstrated how the geography of the Northeast is not a natural division, as one might like to think, but rather a "spatiality which is subject to a pendular movement of construction/destruction, which denies the image of eternity forever associated with space,"³¹ always considering the role of art in that cultural framework.

The *sertão*,³² or backlands, especially, become the stage for a sentimental and whimsical type of naturalism. Journalism reinforces that view. Albuquerque Jr. highlights the importance of media coverage of the 1877–1879 Great Drought in the history of how the Northeast was constructed as a region, through imagination and through media. He argues that the moniker "Great Drought" was coined precisely due to the Southern press' interest in the event, on account of the great migratory movement it generated. Modernism will eventually go on to criticize this naturalist and exotic view of Northeastern landscapes.³³

In cinema, through landscape images and soundscape, the importance of these constructions has always been observed. In her article, Prysthon brings up

30. Prysthon, 2017, p. 7.

31. Albuquerque Jr., 1993, p. 6, our translation. Original text: "espacialidade que está sujeita a um movimento pendular de destruição/construção, que nega a imagem de eternidade sempre associada ao espaço."

32. *Sertão* or *sertões* is a subregion in Northeastern Brazil known for its subarid climate and frequent droughts. We roughly translated it to "backlands" to facilitate readability. So, when we refer to backlands, we refer to *sertões*.

33. Albuquerque Jr., 1993, p. 67–68.

the relationship between landscape and regionalism that serves as the connecting thread of Pernambuco's filmography since before the Cinema Novo (New Cinema) movement in Brazil in the 1960s. There is, generally, a tendency towards romantic aestheticization, which sees the backlands as "barren and inhospitable"³⁴ whereas the coast is seen as urban, opulent, and exuberant. Prysthon points to the "evocative romanticism" of the tropical landscapes in *Aitaré da praia* (Gentil Roiz, 1925) and an "exoticizing sense of space,"³⁵ for both the backlands and the coastal cities, in *O canto do mar* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1953), for instance.

Brazilian cinema, from "Nordwestern"³⁶ movies onwards, also tends to idealize the landscapes of the Northeast. This tradition of critical readings and re-readings of ways of seeing appears as well through the lens of Glauber Rocha in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (*Black God, White Devil*, 1964),³⁷ for example. Ismail Xavier discusses this when approaching the backlands/seashore dichotomy in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*. This binary is fully expressed in the movie's epigraph, during which a *repentista* (a traditional Northeastern musician) sings: "The *sertão* will turn into the sea, the sea will turn into the *sertão*." The phrase refers to the Northeast's geopolitics, which opposes its backlands and countryside to the coastal regions in terms of income concentration. That is, on the coast (seashore) there is wealth, whereas poverty is concentrated in the backlands (*sertão*).³⁸ In the Cinema Novo's imagination,³⁹ the backlands are the home of the common people while the elites live along the shoreline. Rocha's film therefore imagines, in a poetic way, the invasion of the sea by the *sertão* (invasion of

34. Prysthon, 2017, p. 4, our translation.

35. *Ibid.*, our translation.

36. "Nordwestern" is a portmanteau of "Nordeste" (Northeast) and "western" (a US style of cinema), and describes a popular genre of films that became known in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s. Marina Soler Jorge, *Cultura popular no cinema brasileiro dos anos 90*, doctoral dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2007, p. 172.

37. We base our discussion of Cinema Novo's representation of the Northeast on Ismail Xavier's book *Sertão Mar* and in subsequent critiques of his text. The author highlights the issue of dichotomy, which was a prominent topic among many filmmakers attached to Cinema Novo. *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* is seen as an ideal representative of this dichotomy. Ismail Xavier, *Sertão Mar: Glauber Rocha e a estética da fome*, São Paulo, Editora Brasiliense, 1983.

38. Ivana Bentes includes the representation of urban *favelas* (slums) in discussion about this dichotomy in Brazilian cinema. The author equates *sertões* and *favelas* as "frontier territories." Ivana Bentes. "Sertões e Favelas no Cinema Brasileiro Contemporâneo: estéticas e cosméticas," *Revista ALCEU*, vol. 8, no. 15, July–December 2007, p. 242–255, http://revistaalceu-acervo.com.puc-rio.br/media/Alceu_n15_Bentes.pdf (accessed 18 November 2021).

39. A particularity of this movement that should be clarified: several of Cinema Novo directors were political left wingers, many affiliated with PCB (the Brazilian Communist Party). This would play a part in the centrality of the inclusion of *sertão* as a theme.

elite locations by the common folk) and vice versa. The “radical transformation” that the film’s epigraph proposes would thus be a revolution (which Rocha defended).

SOUNDSCAPES OF THE PERNAMBUCO NEW CYCLE OF CINEMA

In order to think about how Northeastern soundscapes are constructed by the two generations of the Pernambuco New Cycle, we will start from a wider overview. We will then see how the idea of the Northeast is presented in the Cycle’s movies in comparison to what we described in the previous section, asking to what extent the first generation’s pop regionalism and the second generation’s more realistic posture contrast or reinforce stereotypes established by Cinema Novo, the Northwestern, and the Recife Cycle. We then consider how sound, in a Schaferian perspective, helps us reflect upon the theme of Northeastern representation.

With the rise of the New Cycle, the backlands/seashore dichotomy is diluted, much like the tendency towards exotification. *Baile Perfumado* shows backlands that are verdant and colourful, as opposed to the desert barrenness of Rocha’s backlands, for instance. In *Árido Movie*, the main character moves from São Paulo, the largest metropolis in Brazil, to the countryside of Pernambuco, with the film’s narrative focusing on the transformations the subject undergoes during this process of migration.

The second generation, whose productions start around 2008, offers a different view of the Northeastern landscape. In general, there is a greater concern with representing urban spaces. *O som ao redor*, for instance, does not resort to the usual images of Recife (aerial views of its bridges, scenes set in its more traditional old town neighbourhood with colourful churches, abandoned buildings, or lively exotic markets), like the city we see portrayed in *Baile perfumado*, *Amarelo Manga*, or *Árido movie*.⁴⁰ This can also be seen in the nonsensical science-fiction feature *Brasil S/A* (2016), “artifice and displacement disfigure the most common images of the present, even the most banal architecture of the Recife upper middle class.”⁴¹

This imaginary surrounding landscape that Prysthon brings up in the New Cycle is echoed in its sound design. In the first generation, it seems to us that the New Cycle’s relationship with sound is primarily expressed through concern with soundtrack,

40. Prysthon, 2017, p. 11

41. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

or with what Nogueira calls “privilege to music.”⁴² The personal proximity that filmmakers had with *manguebeat* musicians results in a series of exchanges between those two groups. Some of the films have music as their central theme (Marcelo Gomes’ *Maracatu, Maracatus*, 1995, for instance), others include *manguebeat* songs on their soundtracks, still others feature musicians as cast members (Fred Zero Quatro, from the band Mundo Livre S/A, shows up in *Amarelo Manga* and *Baile Perfumado*).

Many first-generation directors started out by working on music videos for *manguebeat* bands, taking the lessons they have learned from those processes into their filmmaking, which can be exemplified by the recurrence of an editing style resembling that of music videos. A strong example of this connection between editing and song can be seen in Cláudio Assis’ *Baixio das bestas* (2006), where a sequence of vignettes shows sugarcane fields accompanied by the sound of a *maracatu*. For each vignette, we see the stages of sowing and harvesting, which inform the passing of time within the narrative. Beyond that, however, the vignettes create a slower pace of the narrative, dictate the rhythm of the film, and give us some characterization of its landscapes beyond a purely pictorial approach (thus, the *maracatu* becomes part of the landscape). This music video style notion does not seem to be as prevalent in the second generation, in which one observes a slower temporal flux, with fewer cuts. The effort of the New Cycle pioneers in working with soundtrack may seem thematically different from the matter of soundscapes, especially when non-diegetic music is involved since that music does not necessarily help form the social space of fiction.

Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus (2007) is an exception to this use of pop music in first-generation films. The film relies on other resources. This may be because it is a period piece that reflects on the important role of media in constructing national identity. The film narrates the story of a German man who, living in Brazil during World War II, travels through the Paraíba countryside showing short films that advertise pharmaceutical products, and who forms an unlikely friendship with a local. Non-diegetic music, so common in contemporary films, is not used. All the songs in the film come from the radio. This acousmatic element, the radio, also introduces news that are relevant to the plot. Therefore, it acts alternately as a sound effect, a source of music, or as the interface for an acousmatic voice (that of an old news-show

42. Nogueira, 2009.

narrator, which the sound system merely broadcasts, without allowing its source to be seen) to provide narrative information that makes the dramatic action progress.⁴³

We can observe a similar effect in a second-generation New Cycle movie. In a scene in Gabriel Mascaro's *Ventos de Agosto* (2014), we see the movements that the sound recordist character performs with a microphone and how those movements impact the soundscape. In one scene, he talks to a woman in the village about the best place where the wind can be heard. The woman, in turn, listens to a tune on the radio in her house. As they talk, we can clearly hear the dialogue in the foreground and the music in the background. When the conversation ends, the sound capturer walks two steps sideways and directs his microphone towards the house. From then on, all we can hear is the radio. The acousmatic radio causes estrangement and raises the question of whether it can be considered a local, regional sound. Or whether, in a moment of integration between soundscapes, the sound of the radio serves as a mediator between cultures. In second-generation movies, there is much less non-diegetic music, which results in less space for these pop inclusions and, therefore, less participation from artists of that type. In *O som ao redor*, for instance, there is only one scene with non-diegetic music. In *Ventos de Agosto*, whenever pop music starts playing, it is coming from a stereo system visible in the frame.

In a way, the debate that Schafer's work brings up, about how changes in soundscape in our society alter our aesthetic production, permeates the New Cycle's second generation. It can be found, for instance, in Alysso Oliveira's writings on Kleber Mendonça Filho's *O som ao redor* (2013): "The noises we make [...] reveal who we are. The ones we listen to, where and how we live. It is on this level—in the clash between these two sounds—that the social conditions of our country are materialized."⁴⁴

There is a unique aspect to the development of sound in Brazilian cinema, which can help us to problematize the difference in the use of soundtracks and diegetic sounds between the first and second generations of the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema.

43. Rodrigo Carreiro, "Relações entre imagens e sons no filme 'Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus,'" *Revista da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação – E-com-pós*, vol. 13, no. 1, January–April 2010, p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.30962/ec.440> (accessed 18 November 2021).

44. Oliveira, 2013. Original text: "Os ruídos que produzimos [...] revelam quem somos. Aqueles que ouvimos, onde e como vivemos. É nesse plano—no embate entre os dois—que se materializam as contradições sociais de nosso país" (our translation).

One hypothesis is that the progressive development in access to sound capture and editing technologies influenced this aspect of production. Although many authors, such as Moraes da Costa,⁴⁵ consider the 1990s as the moment when technical excellence arrived to sound engineering of Brazilian cinema, we know that this did not happen homogeneously throughout the country's various regions, and neither were the improvements instantly absorbed throughout all production. Until the mid-2000s, there were still difficulties with the sound engineering of many Brazilian movies, due to issues with the sound recording equipment or lack of sound professionals. This changed dramatically in the following years, partially due to an influx of film school graduates and to the arrival of new and better sound equipment on the market.

This difference allows us to understand why soundscapes constructed by two generations of the same Cycle are so different. In the first generation, there is greater use of non-diegetic sounds, especially soundtracks, whereas the second generation is more adept at recording diegetic sound, or, alternatively, better at utilizing those sounds in editing. This technical difference allows second-generation films to make better use of different types of sounds (soundtracks, sound effects, direct sound, etc.), and make them more apt to explore the everyday sounds of an urbanized city.

Another hypothesis has to do with an aesthetic development of how the concept of the Northeast evolved in the works of these filmmakers, who sought to resist the long-established stereotype modes of hearing local soundscapes. If the pop regionalism of the first generation is a response to the *sertão*/seashore dichotomy, or at least to the ways Cinema Novo thought of those matters, then it is reasonable to think that a radicalized naturalism (through direct sound and sources of sound that are shown on screen) deepens that process. The first generation of the New Cycle denies the exotic image of the backlands shown in the 1960s Cinema Novo, instead framing the landscape with modern *manguebeat* and urban noises. The second generation, in turn, goes beyond that, rejecting even this newer style of regionalism and presenting the noise of the city in a raw form.

This radicalization can be seen, for example, in Gabriel Mascaro's *Avenida Brasília Formosa* (2009). The plot follows the inhabitants of a community that has been displaced to make room for an expressway. The spaces the characters walk

45. Fernando Moraes da Costa, *O som no cinema brasileiro: Revisão de uma importância indeferida*, doctoral dissertation, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2006.

through are characterized by an invasion of sounds from outside the frame. Indoor, home environments are shown as tiny and claustrophobic, and this small private space is inevitably invaded by external sounds from the public space.

In both *O som ao redor* and *Avenida Brasília Formosa* can be observed a theme of clashes between the street and the home, in different neighbourhoods and environments in the city of Recife. We may say that in both movies, there is an invasion, which happens primarily through sound, of the private home by the public sphere; the difference would be in how the film's characters assimilate or react to this invasion. Whereas in the upper middle-class neighbourhood in Mendonça's film this invasion is read as a threat, in the periphery in which Mascaro's film is set it is seen as part of the reality of everyday life. Both filmmakers construct this scenery through a similar resource: the mixing of urban sounds.

In another scene, coming from outside and then into the frame, a sound bicycle⁴⁶ plays some old-fashioned *bregra*⁴⁷ music and advertises a neighbourhood meeting to take place that night. It is the instrument's sounds, so typical of that place, that textually announce the next development in the film's narrative. These sound textures, which permeate the public and private spaces of the urbanized cities represented in second generation New Cycle films, give us a better understanding of Schafer's idea of soundscape, especially the lo-fi character of urban soundscapes.

CONCLUSION

In this article we reflected on how both generations of the so-called Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema express the idea of the Brazilian Northeast through their films' soundscapes. To that end, we described Schafer's ideas on soundscapes and their relationship with the concept of *paysage* (or landscape) in art history and cinema before taking a deeper look at Schafer's legacy in the study of sound. Then we presented the New Cycle, as described in Nogueira⁴⁸ and Prysthon,⁴⁹ and to better think about the idea of the Northeast, we employed Albuquerque Jr.'s⁵⁰

46. Bicycle equipped with a loudspeaker, used as a vehicle for publicity in poor neighbourhoods within the city.

47. *Brega* is a popular music style in Brazil. A literal translation of the word would probably be "corny" or "tacky," but here it refers to a type of country music.

48. Nogueira, 2009.

49. Prysthon, 2017.

50. Albuquerque Jr., 1993.

overview of how the region was portrayed in cinema and in other media before the New Cycle. And finally, we discussed aspects that stand out in the construction of the Northeastern region in the movement's films, problematizing examples of how those markings are expressed sonically.

Schafer's ideas are relevant in the study of filmic sound design, particularly in movies in which the matter of urban versus rural takes centre stage. Although the use of his method itself seems excessive, because both art history and sound study offer better paradigms with which to think about these movies, a conversation about lo-fi and hi-fi soundscapes is extremely fruitful. The New Cycle's soundscapes echo Schafer's interest in the 1970s.

When we think about how the idea of the Northeast is presented through soundscapes in the New Cycle, we believe that both generations of that movement recall, update, and critique the 1960s Brazilian Cinema Novo. There are notable differences between those generations, however. The first one is more invested in a sort of "pop regionalism," which is expressed through a strong bond with contemporary local musicians. It is a defence of regional talents, such as the *manguebeat* movement, which at the same time possesses a modern sound that propels its spread through the rest of Brazil. Musical style even influenced the editing style that has been compared with that of music videos for its quick and fragmented montage. The films of the second generation employ less non-diegetic music and feature fewer musicians, leaving the image editing to rely mostly on long takes, which in turn influences sound editing.

When it comes to similarities between the two generations, there is recurring creative use of acousmatic sources, for example in *Cinemas, Aspirinas e Urubus* (2005) and *Ventos de Agosto* (2011), and a strong discussion on the characterization of urban and rural spaces. As such, the great dichotomy between the backlands and the seashore posed by Cinema Novo begins to be questioned not only in the choice of locations and plots, but also in sound design. The search for lo-fi in the countryside and hi-fi in the cities, as well as an editing style that either privileges the backgrounds or lessens the divide between figure and ground, are characteristics of this movement, which redefines not only our ways of seeing, but also our ways of hearing the soundscapes of the Brazilian Northeast.

Soundscapes of the Pernambuco New Cycle of Cinema

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Raymond Murray Schafer's concept of "soundscape," specifically in its relation and applicability to the discussion of the construction of space in cinema (Prysthon, 2017). We begin by reviewing the concept in Schafer (2001) and consider its pertinence to the study of sound design. Then, we investigate how the relation between soundscapes and sound design presents itself in the works of two successive generations of the Novo Ciclo de Cinema Pernambucano (Nogueira, 2009). Lastly, we point to ways in which those films represent the sounds of Northeastern Brazil, sometimes denying, sometimes identifying with the notion of the "invention of the Northeast," advanced by Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr. (1993).

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article explore le concept de paysage sonore de Raymond Murray Schafer (2001), tout particulièrement dans sa relation et son applicabilité à la discussion engagée par certains auteurs autour de la construction de l'espace au cinéma (Prysthon, 2017). Pour ce faire, nous commençons par passer en revue le concept de paysage sonore dans Schafer (2001), et nous réfléchissons à la pertinence de cette notion pour l'étude du design sonore. Ensuite, nous étudions comment cette relation entre paysage

sonore et design sonore se présente dans les deux générations du Novo Ciclo de Cinema Pernambucano (Nogueira, 2009). Enfin, nous essayons de montrer les différentes façons dont ces films représentent les sons du nord-est du Brésil, parfois niant, parfois s'identifiant à la notion d'« invention du nord-est » présentée par Albuquerque Jr. (1993).

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